

Once a person decides not to use drugs anymore, how does he or she end up using again? Do relapses happen completely by accident? Or are there warning signs and ways to avoid relapse?

Relapse justification is a process that happens in people's minds. A person may have decided to stop using, but the person's brain is still healing and still feels the need for the substances. The addicted brain invents excuses that allow the person in recovery to edge close enough to relapse situations that accidents can happen. You may remember a time when you intended to stay substance free but you invented a justification for using. Then, before you knew it, you had used again.

Use the questions below to help you identify justifications invented by your addicted brain. Identifying and anticipating the justifications will help you interrupt the process.

Someone Else's Fault

Does your addicted brain ever convince you that you have no choice but to use? Does an unexpected situation catch you off guard? **Have you ever said any of the following to yourself?**

- An old friend called, and we decided to get together.
- I had friends come for dinner, and they brought me some wine.
- I was in a bar, and someone offered me a beer.
- Other: _____

Catastrophic Events

Is there one unlikely, major event that is the *only* reason you would use? **What might such an event be for you?**



- My spouse left me. There's no reason to stay clean.
- I just got injured. It's ruined all of my plans. I might as well use.

Relapse Justification I

- I just lost my job. Why not use?
- There was a death in the family. I can't get through this without using.
- Other: _____

For a Specific Purpose

Has your addicted brain ever suggested that using drugs or alcohol is the only way to accomplish something?

- I'm gaining weight and need stimulants to control my weight.
- I'm out of energy. I'll function better if I use.
- I need drugs to meet people more easily.
- I can't enjoy sex without using.
- Other: _____

Depression, Anger, Loneliness, and Fear

Does feeling depressed, angry, lonely, or afraid make using seem like the answer?

- I'm depressed. What difference does it make whether I use?
- When I get mad enough, I can't control what I do.
- I'm scared. I know if I use, the feeling will go away.
- If my partner thinks I've used, I might as well use.
- Other: _____

What might you do when your addicted brain suggests these excuses to use? _____